United Nations A/58/686

General Assembly

Distr.: General
19 January 2004

Original: English

Fifty-eighth session
Agenda item 94 (d)
Environment and sustainable development: further implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States

Letter dated 16 January 2004 from the Permanent Representative of Seychelles to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit to you the final report of the 2nd Small Island Developing States of the Atlantic, Indian Ocean, Mediterranean and South China Seas (AIMS) Regional Meeting to Review the Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, held in Mahé, Seychelles, from 8 to 10 January 2004 (see annex).

On behalf of the participating small island developing States, and at their request, I ask that the present letter and its annex be circulated as a document of the fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly, under agenda item 94 (d).

I believe that this will be a substantial contribution to the success of the Interregional Meeting to be held in the Bahamas and the International Meeting to be held in Mauritius.

(*Signed*) Claude **Morel**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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Annex to the letter dated 16 January 2004 from the Permanent Representative of Seychelles to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Report of the 2nd AIMS REGIONAL MEETING to review the Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States

8-10 January 2004, Mahe, Seychelles

Introduction

1. The 2nd AIMS Regional Meeting for the Review of the Barbados Programme of Action (BPOA) for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States was held at Mahe, Seychelles 8-10 January 2004.

2. The meeting was organised by the Indian Ocean Commission (IOC), with the assistance of the European Union (EU) and United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). The meeting was hosted by the Government of Seychelles.

3. The meeting was opened by the Seychelles Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Jeremie Bonnelame. A message from the Secretary General of the Indian Ocean Commission (COI) was delivered by Mr. Raj Mohabeer. A keynote address was delivered by the Chairman of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS), His Excellency Ambassador Jagdish Koonjul, Permanent Representative of Mauritius to the United Nations.

4. The following AIMS Island Countries were represented: Cape Verde, Comoros, Cyprus, Mauritius, Sao Tome and Principe and Seychelles. Countries unable to attend the meeting were: Guinea Bissau, Maldives, Malta, and Singapore.

5. The following international, regional and national organisations were represented: AOSIS, UNDP, IOC, Seychelles National Commission of UNESCO, Center for Documentation, Research and Training on the South West Indian Ocean (CEDREFI) and Liaison Unit for Non-governmental Organisations in Seychelles (LUNGOS), Seychelles Chamber of Commerce and Industries.

6. Participants noted with regret the considerable damage caused by the cyclone that hit Samoa and Niue, recently. The meeting expressed its full support to the Governments and the peoples of Samoa and Niue at this difficult moment.

7. The meeting learnt with deep sorrow the sudden demise of the Prime Minister of the Commonwealth of Dominica and invited the Chairman of AOSIS to convey to the Government of Dominica and the bereaved family the heartfelt sympathy of the AIMS region.

8. H.E. Ambassador Claude Morel of Seychelles was elected chair of the meeting. Mauritius was designated as rapporteur with Seychelles and Cape Verde appointed as 'friends of the rapporteur'.

9. The delegates present were briefed on the outcome of the Praia AIMS Meeting held in Cape Verde 1-5th September 2003 by the Cape Verde Delegation.

10. The meeting was informed that the National Report for the Seychelles was in its final stages of preparation and adoption. Comoros informed the meeting that the country's National Report was still in the drafting stages. The document had been drafted with stakeholder participation. The report should be ready for the Bahamas meeting. Concerning Sao Tome and Principe, the meeting was informed that up to now, the country has not received the financial assistance allocated for the elaboration of the national assessment report, and this has created difficulties for the process. The meeting was assured that the report would be ready for the Bahamas meeting.

11. With regards to Sao Tome & Principe, the Chairman of AOSIS informed that his office would follow up with UNEP on the issue of financial assistance for completion of their country's National Report.

12. The Mauritian delegation informed that the National Report has been finalised, approved by government and already forwarded to UNDESA. The report was completed with wide stakeholder participation.

13. The meeting was informed that the National Report of Cape Verde was being updated with the input of latest data. The meeting noted that Cape Verde would be hosting a meeting in relation to the NEPAD initiative for the eight African island states for Ministers of Foreign Affairs in mid January 2004.

14. The delegate from Cyprus reassured the meeting that Cyprus would be participating in the meetings in Bahamas and Mauritius, and will remain a member of AOSIS. Cyprus expressed its willingness to be an advocate for SIDS within the EU.

15. The representative of IOC made a presentation on the history, structure and activities of the IOC, and informed the meeting that the IOC Council of Ministers had endorsed the proposal for IOC to become the interim coordinating mechanism for the AIMS Region. Proposals were made as to the role of the IOC as the coordinating mechanism of the AIMS group until the international meeting in Mauritius.

16. The IOC was assigned to prepare a synthesis report on the basis of available National Assessment Reports ahead of the Bahamas meeting.

17. The meeting also acknowledged the lack of resources at the IOC, and the necessity to further strengthen all IOC resources to be able to coordinate the AIMS group through the BPOA process.

18. A discussion on a strategy for the AIMS group took place where proposals for the elements of such a strategy were made. A working group was set up to develop the strategy.

19. During discussions on new and emerging issues, the following presentations were made:

- Invasive species by Mr Rolph Payet of the Seychelles
- Trade Issues by Mr. Jean-Michel Salmon, Resource Person
- HIV/AIDS by Mr Raj Mohabeer of IOC

- Civil society and Youth by Mr Pynee Chellapermal of Centre for Documentation, Research and Training on the South West Indian Ocean (CEDREFI)
- Graduation of SIDS LDCs by Mr. Jose Silva of Cape Verde.

20. The meeting expressed great concern regarding graduation of SIDS which are LDCs and affirmed that a smooth transition should be made possible for graduating countries. At present neither conditions nor guarantees needed for secure transition exists. Graduation should not be envisaged unless a country has made sustainable progress and is capable of benefiting from the new opportunities offered by economic globalisation. The lack of certainty in the situation that a newly graduated country would face implies that a lot more discussion needs to take place prior to any graduation, so as to ensure that the graduation does not disrupt national development or hamper economic growth.

21. The meeting was informed of the side meeting planned at the IM Meeting on civil society, a well as the set up of a regional steering committee. A regional steering committee has been set up for the NGOs to steer the BPOA+10 processes. A Youth Forum may be organised with the support of UNESCO

22. The representative of Mauritius made a presentation on the arrangements for the IM and informed of the existence of the web site containing all relevant details for the IM at www.sidsmauritius2004.mu

23. The plenary was divided into three working groups covering the 14 priority areas including new emerging issues with the task of updating the Praia Report so as to produce the finalised AIMS Regional Position.

24. The plenary at its final session adopted the AIMS regional position paper, attached to this report (annex 1), as well the Mahe Strategy (annex 2). The meeting requested the Government of Seychelles to ensure that this report and its annexes are circulated as an official UN document.

25. The delegates expressed their appreciation for the fine hospitality and working arrangements provided for the meeting by the people and Government of the Seychelles.

26. The meeting was closed by the Minister of Environment and Natural Resources, Mr Ronny Jumeau.

Annex 1

AIMS Regional Position Paper

Preamble

The AIMS Regional Meeting for the Review of the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States (BPOA) was held in Praia, Cape Verde 1-5 September 2003. A second meeting was organized in Seychelles, from 8 to 10 January 2004 to finalise this position paper.

Both meetings endorsed the following structure, which would include separate reporting on all the chapters of the BPOA, including new and emerging issues.

The draft AIMS regional position will constitute an important document and a basis for the AOSIS negotiating stance at the upcoming Inter-regional Preparatory Meeting in the Bahamas in January 2004.

Note: New Text is in bold.; Praia numbering is now in brackets.

Climate Change and Sea-Level Rise

1 (18.) The development of climate change action plans and the identification of most vulnerable sites have continued in the region, with some countries progressing to implementation measures, in particular adaptation. All countries in the region have submitted their initial national communications to the UN FCCC. In view of the increasing risk of the adverse effects of climate change on the AIMS region, the meeting underscored the added urgency for the international community to ratify and fully implement the Kyoto Protocol and the need to take further action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and support adaptation measures in SIDS.

2 (18 bis) In view of their small size but large maritime zones, AIMS SIDS need proper climate observation systems to substantiate local changes in the climate and take adaptive measures. There is a need to strengthen the existing observation and monitoring network in the AIMS region. Observational data should be combined with traditional knowledge and technology transfer to provide for the adoption of better adaptation strategies and action.

Natural and Environmental Disasters

3 (19.) Some countries have established national early warning systems and disaster mitigation plans, including national and regional oil spill contingency plans. However, national capacity is unlikely to be able to cope with the growing frequency of extreme weather events, and the costs associated with rehabilitation, in spite of the existence of special funds in some countries. In this regard the meeting called for further international assistance in the development of national disaster mitigation preparedness capacity and the creation of appropriate insurance and re-insurance schemes for SIDS.

Management of Wastes

4 (20.) While some countries have made significant progress in both planning and implementation of waste management policies and programs, most countries have serious difficulties in terms of financial and technical capacity in dealing with

waste management issues. This is further compounded by the lack of available space for storage and disposal. There is a need for the introduction of technology for waste management strategies based on waste minimization, recycling and reuse, appropriate to the scale of SIDS. The integration of waste management with the energy sector and the water and sanitation sector could provide significant cost savings in SIDS, while also conserving scarce natural resources and producing clean energy. The meeting called for international support **to identify low cost waste management system while providing additional financial support** for the development and implementation of technologies **that could be appropriately adapted in SIDS.**

Coastal and Marine Resources

5 (21.) All SIDS in the region have ratified the United Nations Convention of the Law of the Sea and UNEP regional seas conventions and the action plans in their sub-regions. The fisheries sector continues to be a significant foreign income earner for many of the AIMS SIDS. Several of these countries have also ratified the United Nations Fish Stocks Agreement. However, the meeting highlighted that implementation continues to be impeded by financial constraints and a lack of capacity. It also expressed concern regarding the continuing challenges inherent in existing international legislative frameworks and mechanisms. Specific concerns were raised regarding Illegal Unreported and Unregulated fishing, and the monitoring and surveillance of the countries' respective EEZs, the area within their jurisdiction the management of which SIDS continue to seek regional and international cooperation, in accordance with the UNCLOS. The meeting also recorded difficulties encountered in relation to the monitoring and assessment of straddling and highly migratory fish stocks. In this connection existing regional fisheries management mechanisms in the AIMS region were recommended to be strengthened, and developed where appropriate, to support AIMS SIDS in their efforts to conserve and manage this valuable resource. The meeting expressed the need for further assistance from international community in this endeavor and also in the development and implementation of surveillance and monitoring systems, and with the necessary tools to analyze and assess the status of fish stocks.

6 (22.) **The development and implementation of integrated coastal zone management (ICZM), including policies and regulations have been identified as a priority.** In this respect, the need to establish and strengthen appropriate national regulatory enforcement authorities was **also** highlighted. Important aspects of ICZM identified included addressing beach erosion, sand mining and coral reef conservation and protection, so vital to the survival of the islands. A further challenge is the control of land-based sources of pollution, which must be integrated into the coastal zone management policies.

7 **(22 bis) Coral Reefs are at the centre of economic development in the majority of SIDS, and even today many SIDS inhabitants depend upon reef resources for basic livelihood. However, large areas of coral reefs are threatened in SIDS due to local anthropogenic impacts and changes in the global climate, including mass coral bleaching. Consequently, the International Coral Reef Initiative (ICRI) adopted a resolution for consideration by SIDS in the review of the BPOA+10. The resolution calls upon SIDS to address as a priority the impacts of coastal development, coastal tourism, intensive and destructive fishing practices, pollution, as well as unreported and illegal trade**

in corals on the future health of coral reefs. In collaboration with other states and making use of regional mechanisms, SIDS can put in place integrated policies, management approaches, such as marine protected areas, and develop national capacity to monitor, conserve and sustainably manage coral reefs and associated ecosystems. SIDS countries also call upon the international community to continue to financially support regional monitoring efforts, the strengthening of marine protected areas, and address the issue of coping with the impacts of mass coral reef bleaching.

Freshwater Resources

8 (23.) All AIMS SIDS continue to face water management challenges, caused in part by deficiencies in water availability, water catchment and storage, and leakage in the delivery system. Improved use of rainwater harvesting, water conservation and the introduction of innovative technologies to reclaim water has reduced this deficiency. However, increased supply will not be sufficient to address the water problems of the AIMS SIDS unless appropriate institutional strengthening and management techniques are introduced and implemented. It was noted that in certain SIDS in the region these measures were being implemented, through national water management plans.

9 (24.) It was recorded that many of the AIMS SIDS suffer from acute water problems, land degradation and desertification. In this regard it was also noted that many AIMS SIDS have achieved progress in their implementation of the main UNCED conventions. Nonetheless, there have been too few presentations of proposal for funding under the UNCCD and CBD by some AIMS SIDS. It is important for SIDS to maximize their access to available resources under the UNCCD and CBD. Noting the designation of the GEF as a financial Mechanism of the UNCCD, AIM SIDS welcome the opportunity to access GEF financial and technical resources to develop and implement projects to address land degradation, while calling for additional resources to enable them to complete their National Action Programmes (NAP). It was also noted that there was need for an integrated approach toward addressing the vulnerabilities of SIDS. The meeting therefore called for integrated action to combat desertification, climate change and other global environmental crises. **In this context the meeting notes with concern the loss of agricultural crops at the profit of other economic activities and which contribute to land degradation.**

Land Resources

10 (25.) In many SIDS there is a need for land-use databases, to assist in sustainable development planning. Some AIMS SIDS have already developed these in relation to their national development strategies but most are impeded by a lack of financial and technical resources, and by inadequate training and access to remote sensing data. The challenge of reconciling competing land-use interests will require the integration of land-use priorities and policies in national development planning. **It is therefore recommended that Geographical Information Systems, including Land Information Systems, be introduced in AIMS SIDS through training programs, technology transfer and technical assistance.**

11 (26.) In many AIMS SIDS poor agricultural practices and weak watershed management, **further compounded by economic pressure,** have led to serious land

degradation, which has also impacted on **the wetlands**, coastal zones and coral reefs. The meeting recommended that appropriate mechanisms be established at the national and regional levels to strengthen local capacities for improving watershed management and agricultural practices, including fertilizer application and pest management, appropriate to SIDS circumstances.

Energy Resources

12 (27.) Energy costs severely impact the economic and social circumstances of the AIMS SIDS and impede their development efforts. The high cost of dependence on fossil fuel has motivated AIMS SIDS to develop alternate sources of energy, and to pursue energy efficiency and conservation measures. Some SIDS have made innovative use of local energy sources, such as agricultural by-products and hydropower sources, and experimental use of solar and wind power is continuing. Many AIMS SIDS have conducted studies on their renewable energy potential. However, the challenge to fully utilize natural endowments of renewable energy sources will require further exploration in areas such as ocean thermal energy conversion technologies, and will require investment, technology transfer and capacity building appropriate to SIDS. There is a need for the development of a SIDS energy agenda, and for the establishment and or strengthening of regional institutions to conduct research and to provide technical support. In this respect the establishment of a dedicated funding mechanism for the development of renewable energy and energy efficiency in SIDS is imperative, in particular in order to overcome the relatively high establishment costs of renewable energy projects. The meeting identified a key role for the regional development banks, in particular as regards support for technology transfer.

Tourism Resources

13 (28.) Tourism is an important contributor to economic growth in SIDS. Yet the meeting recognised that the sector is open to many exogenous shocks. It also recognised that the tourism sector places demands on other sectors of the economy, such as transportation and communication, infrastructure and the employment market. Many AIMS SIDS have developed national sustainable tourism development plans. There is a continuing challenge to establish the appropriate balance between tourism development and that of other sectors of the economy, while protecting carrying capacity. SIDS have established limits to the scope of further tourism development in view of the importance of economic diversification and stability. Sustainable tourism policy development and implementation efforts should be enhanced, and may require technical and financial support from the development partners, such as the provision of support to training institutions.

14 (29.) It is recognized that there is great potential for the development of ecotourism in SIDS. Ecotourism can assist SIDS in protecting and conserving natural resources and biodiversity, and can contribute to the implementation of national biodiversity action plans. Ecotourism should form an integral part of national tourism development plans. The meeting therefore concluded that it is imperative that AIMS SIDS be assisted in developing the management tools and mechanisms appropriate to their national circumstances, and that ecotourism in SIDS be given the necessary international recognition for its contribution. Any action plans on ecotourism at the international level must give special recognition to the circumstances and challenges of SIDS.

15 (31.) The meeting highlighted the unique cultures of the AIMS region which present opportunities for cultural tourism. As this is mostly an untapped source, this should also be incorporated in the national tourism development plans.

Biodiversity Resources

16 (32 revised) AIMS SIDS are important centers of evolution with high species diversity and endemism; however due to the small size, isolation and fragility of island ecosystems, their biodiversity is amongst the most threatened in the world. All AIMS SIDS have ratified the Convention on Biological Diversity, initiated national biodiversity strategic action plans, and developed protected areas including marine ones. Many AIMS SIDS also invest substantially more financial and other resources in environmental management.. Nevertheless, because of the constraints typical of SIDS in general, AIMS SIDS are in vital need of further technical and financial assistance to implement the national and sub-regional biodiversity conservation programs, including through establishment of Biodiversity Trust Funds.

17 (32 bis) The importance and fragility of biodiversity in AIMS SIDS needs to be better understood. Challenges remain in the development of capacity and in public education and awareness, to ensure that there is widest appreciation of the importance of conservation and sustainable managemen' of biodiversity. Appropriate protocols and regulations must also be established to ensure that bio-piracy is discouraged and prevented, and that research carried out in the AIMS region is made available for the benefit of the communities. Further research facilities in taxonomy should be established nationally and/or regionally with the support of the international community.

18 (33 new) Invasive alien species have been identified as one of the most important threats to AIMS SIDS biodiversity. It is fast becoming a major agent of environmental and landscape changes and with immense and increasingly detrimental effects. AIMS SIDS commit themselves to increasing their efforts to minimize the impact of invasive alien species at community, national and regional levels by prevention, containment and mitigation measures and recognize the need to expand and strengthen habitat programmes in key conservation areas. The ecosystem approach has to be taken into account in any programmes, especially to foster rehabilitation and restoration projects.

19 (new) Ballast water from ships is a major threat to both marine and terrestrial biodiversity. In this context the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) is urged to expedite the process towards the elaboration and conclusion of a Convention on Ballast Water.

National Institutions and Administrative Capacity

20 (33.) The meeting recorded the commitment of AIMS SIDS to developing institutional capacity through the adoption of appropriate national policies and legislation. It was acknowledged that for the most part, institutional capacity in most AIMS SIDS is weak, and this impacts on their ability to implement international agreements, and on their ability to influence the development of those agreements. This was found a significant challenge, particularly as regards effective participation in deliberations dealing with **international and multilateral organizations including the United Nations Organization, the World Trade Organization, in**

the development of international rules and agreements, and on the potential impact of their implementation in SIDS. The meeting underscored the importance of further support from the international community for capacity building in the AIMS region. In order to fulfill their commitments in this regard delegations welcomed the initiative by UN DESA and **University of West Indies-Centre for Environment and Development** (UWICED) to develop a process for strengthening the negotiating skills of SIDS prior to the International Meeting in Mauritius.

Regional Institutions and Technical Cooperation

21 (34.) Regional cooperation among SIDS has been recognized as an important tool for the promotion of sustainable development. However, for most AIMS SIDS this cooperation has been limited, mainly because of geographic dispersion and lack of capacity in the region. The meeting decided that there was a need for a regional support mechanism. **In this context, the meeting welcomed the decision of the Indian Ocean Commission (IOC) to act as an interim regional mechanism with a view to facilitate the coordination of the** preparatory process leading up to the International Meeting in Mauritius. The meeting also recognized that, in order for the IOC to carry out the tasks, it was essential that it be strengthened. The meeting therefore called on international community to assist with financial resources in this regard. It was also agreed that ongoing work toward identifying and evaluating existing capacities for the ultimate establishment of a dedicated regional mechanism should continue.

Transport and Communication

22 (36.) Transport and communication are continuing preoccupations for the AIMS region, particularly for archipelagic SIDS. Many AIMS SIDS face constraints in other productive sectors due to inadequate international and domestic transport facilities and services. The meeting acknowledged the effort being made to ensure that the necessary infrastructure is maintained and expanded. **In this context, the development partners are encouraged to provide the necessary support, both financial and technical, for the development and management of the airports and ports in SIDS.**

23 (36 bis.) In the field of ICT many AIMS SIDS have committed to fully incorporate these technologies in the productive infrastructure of their economies and for government services. Nevertheless there remain serious gaps in coverage and accessibility for the general population. The meeting therefore urged the international community to support the AIMS SIDS in this area.

24 (37.) SIDSNet was recognized for the valuable service it has provided. The meeting however acknowledged that it requires much strengthening and further enhancement, in particularly as regards development of the French language portal. It also concluded that the AIMS SIDS would provide their recommendations for improving the services of SIDSNet, and agreed to make greater effort at regularly updating their national information disseminated through SIDSNet. It was also recommended that there be closer cooperation between SIDSNet and the UNESCO initiative Small Island Voice, to ensure a comprehensive and coherent approach to information gathering and dissemination on SIDS issues.

Science and Technology

25 (38.) The Meeting underscored the importance of science and technology development to the pursuit of an effective sustainable development strategy, **particularly in SIDS**. It noted that some AIMS SIDS have been able to strengthen their science and technology base of their economy. The need for improved science and technology research, technology transfer appropriate for SIDS was **duly recognized**. This was considered an area in which cooperation among the AIMS SIDS could be of great benefit. The experience of other SIDS regions was also considered relevant **and in this context the networking and sharing of information between SIDS should be encouraged.**

26 (35.) The establishment of the Singapore Environment Institute was acknowledged as a newly created structured mechanism for inter-SIDS cooperation that did not exist prior to the Barbados Conference. The SEI **reiterated** its commitment to such cooperation, and invited partnerships with supporting organizations and countries to further develop this initiative. The meeting welcomed this important initiative from the Singapore Government, and encouraged all SIDS to take full advantage of this opportunity, inviting collaboration with the international community. **The meeting called for the establishment and strengthening of Regional centers in the areas of research, training, development of endogenous technology, and provision of legal and technical advice, to facilitate the sustainable development of AIMS SIDS.**

Human Resource Development

27 (39.) Many AIMS SIDS have taken steps to overcome human resource constraints, through the improvement of education and training. A major priority for the AIMS SIDS is the establishment of a sound foundation for human resource development, appropriate to local circumstances and requirements. **This foundation requires appropriate educational programmes at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels, both in the formal and informal sectors, including distance learning.** Some AIMS SIDS have improved their teacher to student ratios as well as the levels of school attendance. Inadequate financial resources for investment in education remain a significant challenge to improving literacy levels and **Human Resources Development (HRD).** Another major challenge highlighted was the difficulty of retaining skilled personnel in the region. The meeting agreed that greater efforts will be required to ensure that adequate opportunities are created to encourage the retention of indigenous skilled personnel. It also considered that the establishment of a SIDS roster of experts or skills bank could assist in the retention of skilled personnel. In this regard, the international community was encouraged to support such efforts through the provision of financial and technical resources. The meeting also called on the international community to utilize SIDS expertise in project implementation, particularly for SIDS related projects. **Meanwhile, AIMS SIDS are encouraged to make full use of expertise available in the region.**

New and Emerging Issues

Trade

28. (42) The meeting recognized that the International Meeting presented yet another opportunity for SIDS to advocate special and differential treatment (SDT)

on grounds of structural disadvantages and vulnerabilities. **In this respect this meeting is fully supportive of efforts developed through the Working Group on Small Economies within the WTO system. Three modalities of SDT were deemed particularly important to AIMS SIDS:**

1. **the preservation of SIDS preferential market access in developed countries (tariff-rate quotas and preferential tariffs), and in case of preferences erosion some appropriate arrangements including financial compensatory mechanisms should be established.**

2. **SIDS should be given ample flexibility in terms of liberalization speed as well as product and service coverage in order both to support local activities in the context of strong competitive natural disadvantages, and to contribute to the consolidation of budgetary resources. This also applies to the Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) negotiations with the EU**

3. **Some AIMS SIDS are not member of the WTO and many of those which are, have no representation in Geneva. In view of the very limited human and financial capacity in trade negotiations and their bargaining power limited by the small size of their own markets, the accession process should be made easier and technical assistance on trade and capacity building should be increased in their favour.**

29 (30.) The meeting emphasized the need to enhance the stability and resilience of the AIMS SIDS through even deeper efforts towards economic diversification and integrated planning. To this end the AIMS SIDS highlighted the scope for further development of marine resources, the expansion of tourism, ICT and other service sectors, and the exploration of the potential of cultural enterprise.

Security and Terrorism

30 (40.) The meeting recognized security in all its aspects as an issue of increasing importance for the AIMS region. Recent events have highlighted the vulnerability of the most productive sectors of the region's economies. This has been exacerbated by the international obligations mandated to address these new security concerns. All countries have obligations under the **UN Security Council Resolution 1373 and other relevant resolutions.** The meeting noted that these obligations created particular difficulties for all SIDS, particularly those with large coastal areas and the archipelagic SIDS.

31 (43.) The meeting affirmed that the case regarding the economic and environmental vulnerability of SIDS has been made decisively. It was agreed that there is need to identify and develop policies that build SIDS' resilience, thereby redressing vulnerability comprehensively. This includes the need to diversify economies and address security concerns.

Governance

32 (44.) The AIMS SIDS reaffirmed their commitment to good governance as a means for achieving sustainable development and for building resilience. **AIMS SIDS are encouraged to sign and ratify the UN Convention Against Corruption that was recently opened for signature in Merida, Mexico.**

33 (45.) It was recognized that while the primary responsibility for sustainable development rests with the national authorities of SIDS, the BPOA stresses the need for international partnership and support. The AIMS SIDS therefore called for fulfillment of international commitment to ensure that the BPOA is fully implemented. This will require support for:

- Public awareness programs on sustainable development;
- Integration of sustainable development principles in all aspects of national development strategies;
- Integrated decision making for sustainable development;
- Improvement of date collection systems to monitor progress in sustainable development;
- Mobilization of resources;
- Coordination mechanisms for delivery on stated goals; and
- Coherent coordinated implementation of MEASs on sustainable development.

The meeting called for the strengthening of international support structures that assist SIDS in:

- Forging strategic alliances to overcome size constraints;
- Capacity-building;
- Developing competitiveness strategies;
- Promoting stability in the macroeconomic environment;
- Diversification;
- Reducing dependence on imported energy;
- Developing capacity in the management of marine resources;
- The use of information technology;
- Education;
- Re-insurance schemes for SIDS;
- Tapping expertise from migrant overseas communities; and
- SIDS-SIDS cooperation.

Funding Mechanisms

34 (46.) The meeting acknowledged that SIDS have continuing difficulties with the disbursement procedures relating to multilateral assistance. In addition the reporting requirements of major funding **agencies** can be quite onerous for AIMS SIDS. The meeting called for the streamlining of procedures to take account of the special situation of SIDS.

35 (47.) The meeting heard three presentations on Type II Partnerships in the AIMS region (SIDS UNIT, Singapore Environment Institute, University of the West Indies Centre for Environment and Development). However, it was noted that there was not a significant number of such initiatives developed in the region. As

partnership was also an important means of implementation of sustainable development programmes, the meeting urged that more such initiatives be developed and invited potential partners to consider projects in the AIMS region.

Civil Society participation and partnerships

36 (New) Since Barbados, civil society in many AIMS SIDS has developed experience and capacity in key areas, such as biodiversity, youth, education and health. Recent international fora, including the WSSD and World Parks Congress , highlighted the necessity to involve civil society in sustainable development. Nevertheless, national governments have experienced difficulties and constraints in involving civil society at the level of policy development and implementation. AIMS SIDS commit themselves to creating enabling environments and to develop new partnership that will ensure the implementation of the Mauritius Plan of Action. AIMS SIDS call upon the international community to assist in this process.

HIV/AIDs

37 (41.) The emergence of highly communicable and vector borne diseases has impacted both the social and economic welfare of the AIMS SIDS. While the successful containment of these diseases has improved the resilience of SIDS, there is scope for further work on containment through the strengthening of health infrastructure and services, thereby strengthening resilience through integrated planning. In this regard the meeting underscored the need for the increased involvement of and cooperation **between** tertiary and research institutions **both in** SIDS **and the international community**.

Graduation

38 The meeting recalls the special importance to the economic vulnerability criterion in the methodology for reviewing the list of least developed countries, among which, all potential graduation cases are SIDS. **The trade and financial benefits derived from the status of the least developed countries (LDC's) are of key importance for these SIDS to tackle their specific constraints and structural difficulties in the pursuance of sustainable development.** The meeting held the strong view that the consideration of Cape Verde and Maldives for graduation should be made in this perspective.

Annex 2

Mahé Strategy

The AIMS group considers the Inter-Regional Meeting in the Bahamas as an important milestone on the road to Mauritius for the International Meeting. The AIMS group should therefore contribute fully and in a productive manner in the Bahamas meeting to ensure that the issues of critical importance of the group is fully addressed, and the desired outcome achieved. To this end the following strategy is formulated.

Aim

1. To provide a way for the AIMS group to take the Regional Position Paper forward.
2. To provide guidance on the coordination and negotiating arrangements for the AIMS group at the Bahamas meeting.
3. To indicate the Desired Outcomes arising from the Bahamas meeting for the AIMS group.

Priorities

The AIMS group reaffirms the priorities in the **AIMS Regional Position Paper**, as being ultimate expression of the groups position.

Furthermore, the AIMS group recognise the following as being vital for sustainable development in the AIMS region:

1. Good Governance (role of civil society, legislative frameworks, transparency, accountability, etc.)
2. Security (in all aspects)
3. Trade and Investment (investments to build resilience, alternatives to special and differential treatment – phasing out fund, compensation, flexible agreements)
4. Health (in all its aspects – services, prevention)
5. Enabling Environments at the National Level, particularly through integrated planning and policy development.
6. Sustainable Capacity Building
7. Financial Resources (information on existing resources, facilitating links between needs and resources, donor coordination) and monitoring of implementations
8. Partnerships (with donor countries, with other SIDS regions, etc.)
9. Information for Decision Making (SIDSNet, simplified reporting and metadata)
10. Education for sustainable development (cooperation with other SIDS regions and their tertiary institutions, curriculum development, teacher training)
11. Information and Communication Technology

Means of Implementation

The AIMS group lays strong emphasis on the **Means of Implementation** for the **Mauritius Outcomes** including the priorities listed above. This would entail *inter alia* political commitment from AIMS countries, effective national and regional implementation frameworks, integrated planning and policy development, concrete and visible international support, as well as monitoring and evaluation.

While sustainable development is acknowledged as a national responsibility, the BPOA also firmly establishes that this shall be done in partnership. Bearing in mind these national responsibilities, it is important for the AIMS countries to show in concrete terms what they are willing to commit to. Hence the strategy is a matter of substance as well as a matter of the specific approach (national actions coupled with regional support and international funding and expertise).

The AIMS group reaffirms that for the **Mauritius Outcomes** to have concrete benefits for SIDS, there must be a more effective and coordinated monitoring process, through existing institutions such as the CSD. Nevertheless, the effective operation of these institutions should be reviewed in terms of the Mauritius Outcomes.

Immediate Concerns

The meeting expresses great concern regarding graduation of Small island Developing States which are LDCs, and affirms that a smooth transition should be made possible to graduating countries. It will be necessary for all SIDS regions to work together with AOSIS in the further development of their views on the graduation process and the implications of graduation, and to present these at appropriate venues such as the CDP, ECOSOC as well as at the International Meeting. It would be of further benefit to the international debate if the requirement to hold international roundtables to discuss the specific situations of individual potentially graduating LDCs be carried out, in accordance with the recommendations of ECOSOC on the convening by the UN of roundtable meetings of development partners to examine the most desirable set of measures to ensure a smooth transition.

Coordination

All non-IOC AIMS countries have to designate focal points and communicate these to the IOC Secretariat.

A dedicated list-serv will be established in partnership with the **AOSIS SIDSNet** and **UNDESA** to ensure improved dissemination of information. It is important for this information to reach all stakeholders.

The **Indian Ocean Commission** will act as facilitator and secretariat for the AIMS group in the process leading up to Mauritius. This would entail the preparation of the synthesis report, distribution of relevant documents, coordination with other regional groups, liaison with the AOSIS chairmanship and UNDESA.

At the Bahamas meeting, the AIMS group shall meet as required for coordination purposes. The group will as appropriate designate specific coordinators on specific issues.

It is expected that at the earliest possible time, well ahead of the Mauritius Meeting, a formal regional cooperation mechanism should be established for the AIMS region. AIMS Ministers are encouraged to discuss political aspects relating to this mechanism at Bahamas, including seeking international support.

Desired Outcomes

1. Improved Means of Implementation
2. Donor coordination in the implementation of the BPOA to include all relevant international institutions
3. Dedicated international monitoring machinery
4. Strengthening of the UNDESA SIDS unit with a committed budget
5. Proposals for the Agenda for Mauritius
6. Firm political commitment by AIMS Ministers for the setting up of a regional mechanism for the Mauritius meeting and beyond.
7. Clear commitments of the donor community to the Mauritius meeting process
8. Improved coordination within the UN system